



When you wash your car on pavement, our water is affected

How does washing my car at home cause pollution?

- When you wash your car in the driveway or on the street, all the soap, scum and oily grit runs into the storm sewers and from there to the nearest stream, river or lake.
- That causes pollution which is unhealthy for fish.
- Phosphates in the soap also may cause algae to bloom. Algae competes with fish and other biotic life for the oxygen in the water.

What is the problem?

- The current No. 1 water pollution problem comes from nonpoint source pollution.
- Nonpoint source pollution means the pollutants come from several sources instead of one discharge point.
- Nonpoint pollution occurs away from waterways, so many people do not realize they are contributing to water pollution.
 - People wash their cars in their driveways or on the streets.
 - Property owners do not follow directions and put too much fertilizer on their lawns.
 - Cars leak fluids such as oil or antifreeze on the pavement.
 - Pet owners do not pick up and properly dispose of their pets' waste.
 - The rainwater will wash the pollutants into storm sewers.
 - The pollution will be carried – untreated – to the nearest body of water.

What can I do?

- Wash your car on a grassy area, if possible, so the ground can filter the water naturally. While also watering your lawn, this slowly adds water to the water table.
- Use soap sparingly. Try to use non-phosphate detergents.
- Use a high-pressure, low-volume hose that has a pistol grip or trigger nozzle to save water.
- Wash one section of the car at a time and rinse it quickly.
- When you're done, empty your bucket of soapy water down the sink, not in the street or on the driveway.
- Best of all, take your car to a commercial car wash, where the water gets treated and recycled.
- If you plan to hold a car wash "fund raising event," contact your local sewer or public works department. They can provide suggestions on alternatives to direct discharge of soapy water to a sanitary sewer system.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about the impacts from washing your vehicle and what you can do to prevent water pollution, contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management at (317) 232-8670.